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PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER COOPERATION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, THE NEW INDEPENDENT STATES AND THE BALTIC COUNTRIES

SUMMARY

The present document reports on and analyses major new trends and developments of UNICEF cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe, the new independent States and the Baltic countries during 1993.

The report discusses UNICEF cooperation in terms of regular programmes, emergency assistance and situation monitoring, information exchange and policy development in the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

As of the end of 1993, Executive Board-approved programmes of cooperation had been established in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

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I. OVERVIEW OF MAJOR ISSUES AFFECTING CHILDREN AND WOMEN

1. In accordance with the mandates provided by the Executive Board between 1990 and 1993, UNICEF has progressively extended its advocacy, information, emergency and programme assistance activities to countries in central and eastern Europe, the new independent States and the Baltic countries. As the amount and quality of information available to UNICEF about the situation of women and children in these countries has progressively increased, deteriorating conditions have been revealed. Although attention, both internationally and within the countries of the region, has remained focused on the rapid and profound economic changes taking place, the significance of the social transformation accompanying the transition continues to be underestimated. The "shock therapy" of large-scale privatization, labour market reforms and the dismantling of inter- and intra-state trading systems has failed to bring about the rapid growth and prosperity hoped for in the early stages of the transition. Meanwhile, the immediate effects on the population have frequently been negative, bringing about great increases in unemployment, sharp declines in real wages and massive price increases, often accompanied by shortages of basic commodities previously supplied through State-controlled systems.

2. The effects of the transition on women and children, while varying in degree from one country to another, have generally been severe. A UNICEF study on public policy and social conditions, carried out with the participation of the central statistical offices and policy specialists of nine countries, documents increasing poverty and declining indicators of health and well-being in many of the countries. In a region where female labour force participation has traditionally been very high and essential to maintaining household incomes, unemployment is affecting women disproportionately. The erosion of the real values of pensions and family allowances has increased the burden on women as providers. Access to and availability of health, education, child care and other previously free social services has, in effect, declined as restructuring of these services along market lines has begun. In many countries, such basic supplies as drugs and textbooks have become scarce. So far, there has been minimal investment in the transformation of health and welfare services, which are often of low quality and lacking in well-trained personnel and appropriate equipment. Crude death rates have increased in many of the countries. There has been an alarming increase in vaccine-preventable and other infectious diseases in some countries. Sharp falls in the birth rate have been recorded throughout the region, reflecting both the economic hardships being experienced by the population and an apparent lack of confidence in the future. Continuing reliance on abortion as a major means of birth control poses a major threat to women's health.

3. Children are, of course, the first to suffer from the breakdown of the family, the increasing incidence of household poverty and the decline in social services. In addition, the changing social order in many countries has brought about a decrease in school attendance and a rise in the number of street children and in the frequency and gravity of juvenile crime, phenomena which the emergent societies of the region are poorly equipped to handle.

4. The new democratic systems now in place in the region have brought significant increases in individual freedoms and rights and a degree of decentralization of political and social power to the subnational level. Nevertheless, effective public participation in national and local democratization is limited by the lack of education and appropriate tradition. Political instability continues to be widespread, manifesting itself in the rise of nationalism and ethnic intolerance. In a number of cases, this has led to armed conflict either within States or between them, accompanied by the diversion of human and material resources to support war efforts, the destruction of social infrastructure and mass movement of refugees. Social repercussions of the transition, such as increasing disparities in living standards among different sectors of the population, are a further source of tension, threatening the entire economic and political reform process.

II. INTER-COUNTRY ACTIVITIES

5. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Declaration of the World Summit for Children have provided a relevant framework for working with countries as they undergo economic and social transition. As of October 1993, 22 out of 27 countries in central and eastern Europe and the new independent States had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and some 15 countries had signed the Declaration of the World Summit for Children.

6. In Executive Board decisions 1990/5 (E/ICEF/1990/13), 1991/20 (E/ICEF/1991/15) and 1992/19 (E/ICEF/1992/14), the UNICEF mandate to support the development of child-focused policies was enunciated. Much of this support has been provided through intercountry activities and emphasized in particular situation analyses and the preparation of national programmes of action (NPA) as important steps in the policy development process.

7. Situation analyses of children and women have been completed in Bulgaria and Poland, and the process is well under way in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. Rapid assessments of the situations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Slovenia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia resulted in short, action-oriented situation analyses of children and women and have provided a basis for planning UNICEF cooperation with the respective Governments over the next two to three years.

8. The development of national programmes of action is of special significance for countries in transition, providing an opportunity to review and revise social policy and to mobilize resources in favour of the health and welfare of children. During 1993, UNICEF convened three meetings, two in Hungary and one in Latvia, to provide an impetus for the development of national programmes of action. A number of countries, including Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia and Ukraine, have now initiated the process of preparing a national programme of action.

9. Strategies to meet the mid-decade goals, identified in 1993 from among the 27 goals endorsed at the World Summit for Children, have been outlined for Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Tajikistan,

Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In most of these countries, the quantitative goals in such areas as immunization and basic education have already been met. Great efforts are needed, however, to maintain existing levels of coverage and to improve the quality of services. In support of the mid-decade goal of universal salt iodization, UNICEF is implementing a two-year project in selected countries to eliminate iodine deficiency disorders by 1995.

10. A range of allies has been enlisted in support of priority children's issues in the region. A parliamentarians' workshop on safety nets for the welfare of children and vulnerable families was held at Budapest in March 1993, organized jointly by UNICEF and the Hungarian Inter-Parliamentary Group and sponsored by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The workshop offered parliamentarians from central and eastern Europe a forum for the discussion of safety-net issues and concluded with a commitment by the participants to the development and formulation of national programmes of action.

11. All three Baltic countries have recently formed National Committees for UNICEF, which, through their diverse and influential memberships, will play an important role in supporting the preparation of situation analyses and national programmes of action and in mobilizing public support of national programme of action implementation at national and local levels. New National Committees for UNICEF have also have been created in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia. In Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland, National Committees are being reinforced and are developing information and advocacy programmes, assisting with situation analyses and strengthening their capacity and financial viability.

12. A number of other intercountry and regional activities are under way. Through its International Child Development Centre, UNICEF is supporting a project that monitors public policy and social conditions in the region during the transition to market economies. The study documents the changes in key welfare indicators, relating them to the main economic trends and policy approaches. The project also assists Governments to provide regular information on the situation of vulnerable groups and to strengthen the planning process in social sectors. The first of the project's biennial reports has been completed. It documents baseline conditions in the late 1980s, changes in human welfare during the period 1989-1993 and their possible causes and the short-term outlook and changes in child and family policies.

13. In September 1993, a joint UNICEF/United Nations Population Fund regional conference on family planning was held at Teheran, hosted by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Representatives from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan attended. In December 1993, immediately after the fifteenth anniversary celebration of the Alma Ata conference on primary health care, UNICEF participated in a ministerial consultation on health care management and financing in the central Asian republics.

14. Other seminars and workshops organized during 1993 with the assistance or sponsorship of UNICEF, in cooperation with other international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), included a joint UNICEF/World Health Organization (WHO) workshop to adapt the WHO modules for diarrhoeal disease programme management to conditions in the central Asian republics and the

Russian Federation; a UNICEF-supported vaccine planning and policy meeting for central Asian republics, held at Bishkek; an international training seminar on the implementation of the International Code of Marketing Breast Milk Substitutes, held at Prague; three joint UNICEF/WHO training workshops on lactation management and the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, held at Saint Petersburg; an education for development seminar on preparing young people for the challenge of change, held at Sofia; and a seminar on children with disabilities in the Baltic countries, held at Vilnius.

III. PROGRAMME COOPERATION

15. As approved by the Executive Board at its 1993 regular session, two-year "bridging" programmes have been initiated in Armenia (E/ICEF/1993/P/L.22), Azerbaijan (E/ICEF/1993/P/L.23), Kazakhstan (E/ICEF/1993/P/L.24), Kyrgyzstan (E/ICEF/1993/P/L.24), Tajikistan (E/ICEF/1993/P/L.24), Turkmenistan (E/ICEF/1993/P/L.24) and Uzbekistan (E/ICEF/1993/P/L.24). A UNICEF presence is being established in those countries, with arrangements under way for field offices. Assessment missions have also been conducted to plan programmes in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. National plans of action for immunization have been developed in all of the central Asian republics, while modest supplies of vaccines and syringes were delivered to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Support is being given to programmes on acute respiratory infections and the control of diarrhoeal diseases in these countries. New country programme recommendations for these countries will be presented to the Executive Board in 1995; a country programme recommendation for Georgia (E/ICEF/1994/P/L.28) will be submitted to the Executive Board at its second regular session in 1994.

16. In Albania, a three-year country programme for the period 1993-1995 (E/ICEF/1993/P/L.21) was prepared that emphasizes the provision and promotion of basic services for women and children in the health, nutrition and education sectors; support for other areas crucial to the well-being of children and women, such as the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the development of a national programme of action in favour of stronger child-focused policies; and assistance to establish a better database of social indicators to monitor the effects of the transition process. In July 1993, a donor consultation on assistance to the Albanian education sector was organized jointly by UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

17. In Romania, a two-year supplementary-funded programme for the period 1993-1994 (E/ICEF/1993/P/L.29) extends UNICEF activities from emergency interventions for institutionalized children to more systematic efforts to protect children and promote their development. The new programme emphasizes intersectoral efforts to educate, inform and equip families and the community to respond better to the needs of children, particularly those in difficult circumstances. Several projects focus on the preparation of social workers, modernization of approaches to juvenile justice and the integration of handicapped children into mainstream education and preschool education.

IV. EMERGENCIES

18. In 1993, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme, UNICEF took part in consolidated appeals for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Tajikistan, which were launched by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. Emergency programmes in those countries provided entry points for the formulation of country programmes. Within the framework of the United Nations inter-agency humanitarian assistance plan, UNICEF continues to assist in meeting the urgent needs of women and children in the five republics of the former Yugoslavia. Responding to an urgent request from the Minister of Health in Moldova, in June 1993, UNICEF provided an emergency short-term supply of vaccines and in early September 1993 participated in an inter-agency mission to assess urgent needs for assistance in the social sector. Advances from the Emergency Programme Fund enabled UNICEF to respond quickly, but on a limited scale, to the urgent needs in all these countries.

19. In early 1993, in response to a special request launched by UNICEF based on the findings of the February 1992 UNICEF/WHO collaborative missions to the new independent States, the Government of Canada contributed $5.7 million to assist children and women in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. A UNICEF programming mission in March/April 1993 determined high-priority, short-term emergency needs with relevant ministries. Essential drugs, vaccines, cold-chain equipment, medical equipment and supplies and related training were provided. UNICEF is now assisting these countries with the elaboration of national programmes of action for children and a Russian adaptation of Facts for Life messages. The European Union has also contributed funds for cold-chain equipment in the Russian Federation.

20. As authorized by Executive Board decision 1992/20 (E/ICEF/1992/14), UNICEF continues to participate in the Inter-Agency Task Force for Chernobyl. UNICEF assistance to victims of the Chernobyl disaster has been provided in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization through a number of psycho-social rehabilitation centres.

V. INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION

21. UNICEF continues to collaborate with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs on consolidated appeals and emergency operations (see chapter IV above and document E/ICEF/1994/11 on emergency operations). Cooperation with the United Nations/UNDP offices in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Ukraine has greatly facilitated UNICEF activities in these countries.

22. At the country level, UNICEF has formed mutually reinforcing partnerships with multilateral and bilateral organizations. In Romania, for example, UNICEF has been recognized by UNDP, the World Bank and other partners as playing an important leadership role in social issues, complementary to the roles of UNDP and the World Bank in promoting economic growth. A number of joint activities have been carried out with WHO, especially in the area of women's health.

VI. MANAGEMENT, ORGANIZATION AND EXPENDITURES

23. The Central and Eastern Europe/New Independent States Section works as a single unit functioning from both New York and Geneva, with the chief based in New York. The section coordinates with the Programme Funding Office to secure supplementary funds and with the Office of Emergency Programmes on emergencies in the region. Special representatives are responsible for implementing programme activities in Albania, Romania and the former Yugoslavia and an area representative is responsible for activities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Small offices are being established in each of these countries, as well as in Armenia and Azerbaijan. A number of staff have been temporarily seconded from UNICEF offices in New York, Geneva and other places for programming missions.

24. With the deteriorating circumstances of women and children noted above, UNICEF is called upon increasingly to provide emergency assistance and to work with various partners to help in the now 27 countries of the region. This enormous increase in the headquarters workload is greatly taxing UNICEF capacity to respond appropriately to the many requests received. In light of the objective data now available, the question of how best UNICEF can provide support to the various countries at different levels of socio-economic development needs to be addressed.

25. As of 23 December 1993, the total general resources allotment for the countries, excluding the republics of the former Yugoslavia, during 1993 was $10,374,985. Supplementary funding was received in the amount of $11,416,130. These amounts represent 2.1 and 1.8 per cent respectively of UNICEF general resources and supplementary funds.

VII. LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

26. The countries of the region began reforms to improve social and economic performance in the early 1990s. At a time of profound political, social and economic transformation, UNICEF has a rare opportunity to ensure that the goals of the World Summit for Children are fully incorporated into the process of change in the countries in transition.

27. Despite the difficulties inherent in creating a constituency for children in a period of such intense change, experience in the region has shown that UNICEF can be a successful advocate for children and women with both Governments and other donors, although the human and financial resources it has committed are limited.

28. UNICEF has succeeded in making an impact in the region through the integration of emergency responses and longer-term planning, flexibility in facilitating the roles of others and the use of the organization's technical capacities. The data collection and analysis efforts being supported by UNICEF in the countries of the region are providing telling evidence, important for all partners, of the deteriorating social situation in these countries. It has drawn attention to the need for a strengthened social safety net and coherent social policies. In many countries, transfer and exchange of knowledge has

proven to be a cost-effective intervention for population groups who have been isolated from modern developments and who are eager to absorb new ideas. Through a variety of country, inter-country and regional activities, UNICEF has also played an important role in promoting intersectoral approaches to the identification and solution of child problems and in encouraging dialogue between governments, NGOs, the media and other parties, including major donors.

29. Cooperation in Romania, which was the first country in the region to receive programme assistance, provides an example of flexible programming with limited financial resources. Over the period 1990-1993, assistance to the children and women of Romania has been reoriented from emergency interventions towards the establishment of more permanent and appropriate systems of care and the creation of preventive health and social service approaches, emphasizing quality and improved participation. The provision of small amounts of material and technical assistance has served as the impetus for policy discussions and subsequent action in favour of child welfare and protection. Studies and surveys have identified the problems of children, strengthened national research capacity and enabled authorities to move rapidly from analysis to action. A notable example of information to increase resources for children is the $30 million procurement of essential drugs through the UNICEF Supply Division at Copenhagen for the World Bank health rehabilitation project. A study has been initiated by the UNICEF Social Policy and Economic Analysis Office to analyse the specific mechanisms responsible for the cost savings achieved.

30. A rapid response to the urgent situation in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine (see para. 19 above) was made possible. Through innovative management, including the flexible deployment of a core implementation team, specific requests for essential drugs, cold-chain equipment, medical equipment and supplies were met. UNICEF also worked with the Governments concerned to create a stronger base for identifying needs and protecting the health and welfare of the most vulnerable groups through the development of national programmes of action.

31. Achievements as well as the constraints of UNICEF involvement in the countries of the region during the past three years highlight the need to reassess the extent and level of involvement as more data become available on the deteriorating situation. While UNICEF has been able to launch the processes of situation analysis and national programme of action preparation in many of the countries, and to encourage the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the lack of a permanent UNICEF presence in most countries hinders the continuous advocacy necessary for successful development and implementation of appropriate policies and programmes. The effectiveness of cooperation with the United Nations and other international agencies is also diminished where there is no permanent presence in the country.

32. The challenge for UNICEF is to deploy sufficient capacity to monitor the situation of vulnerable groups and to promote widespread awareness and understanding of their needs, leveraging the resources of others to help devise and produce solutions to problems. Although UNICEF action in the region will necessarily continue to be limited because of its priorities in other areas of the world, its role as a catalyst in promoting social development and progress can be enhanced by committing additional resources. UNICEF can develop

innovative, cost-effective approaches to situations of rapid change. Experience gained in the countries of central and eastern Europe and in the new independent States will be of increasing relevance to UNICEF as other countries enter new stages of economic and social development.

33. Experience gained in 1993 and 1994 will be used in 1995 in preparing new five-year country programme recommendations for the countries that meet the criteria for UNICEF programmes of cooperation.

34. The Executive Board will also be requested to review, in light of changing circumstances, the UNICEF mandate for the other countries in the region and to provide guidance regarding the most appropriate strategy for continued UNICEF cooperation.